

JESSE FELL HOUSE
NORMAL ILLINOIS
McLEAN Co.

HABS NO. ILL 262
HABS
ILL.
57-NORM
1.

Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA.
DISTRICT NO. ILL.-2

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
•EDGAR E. LUNDEEN - DISTRICT OFFICER•
CORN BELT BANK BUILDING - BLOOMINGTON ILL.

HABS
ILL,
57- NORM,

1 -

JESSE FELL HOUSE
Normal, McLean County, Illinois

Owner. Mrs. J. W. Heckethorn.

Date of Erection. 1856-57.

Architect. Designed by Jesse Fell.

Builder. Jesse Fell and John F. Rees.

Present Condition. The building has been moved from its original site on the southwest corner of Broadway and Irving Street to the southeast corner of Irving and Fell Avenue. The office and entire one story section on the south, and the cupola on the roof, has been removed. The building is not maintained very successfully at this writing and is rapidly deteriorating.

Number of Stories. Two.

Materials of Construction. The foundations of the building are brick with the superstructure of oak studs and pine siding. On the exterior, under the veranda which originally extended on three sides, the siding is five-inch, matched boards. The second story is lapped siding about five inches to the weather. At the present time, the veranda extends only across the north, which was the east elevation on the original site. The entire south one story portion has been removed, this section being indicated on the drawings.

The interior walls are plaster, on wood studs. Pine

floors. The typical interior trim for doors and windows are pine, moulded, with heavy caps. The stair railing is solid walnut with turned balusters. Oak floor joists and roof rafters.

Other Existing Records. "The Life of Jesse W. Fell" by Frances Milton I. Morehouse, A.M., in Withers Public Library and McLean County Historical Society, Bloomington, Illinois. Original photograph owned by Rachel Fell Treakle, Normal, Illinois, daughter of Jesse W. Fell.

Hundreds of manuscripts, periodicals, documents, and miscellaneous writings are to be found listed in the book by Morehouse. These are written by such famous personalities as W. H. Herndon, Edmund Janes James, Adlai E. Stevenson, Ida M. Tarbell, Charles M. Thompson, Lawrence Weldon, and many others, besides sketches in newspapers, magazines, etc.

Additional Data. When Jesse Fell came to McLean County the winds of summer and the snows of winter were blowing over the prairies. He began to plant trees, and some records indicate that he planted more than thirty thousand maples, elm, and other types, a great many of them to this day, standing as living memorials to this man of vision, philanthropy, and seemingly endless vitality for carrying out his dreams.

"It was during the summers of 1856 and 1857 that Fell built the house at Fell Park in North Bloomington, which became afterward one of the landmarks of Normal. The house still stands (1936), altho removed from its original site.

It was a roomy square wooden structure, with a cupola atop, and verandas built around three sides. It stood upon a knoll which Mr. Fell had selected more than twenty years before as a good place for his final residence. Here he secured about eighteen acres on the edge of the town, and planted the land to trees and shrubs according to the plans of William Saunders of Philadelphia, a landscape gardener of reputation. A herd of deer was added later, and the park was frequently opened to the public. Men great in the history of Illinois and the nation were entertained there; it became a famous meeting-place of notable people. Lovejoy, Bryant, Lincoln, Davis, Swett, and other leaders were frequent visitors. The Fell children entertained their friends there freely; it was a center of social life. The master of the house, himself usually absorbed in business, liked to have people about him enjoy themselves. In the town's first years, this was the only private house in Normal in which dancing was permitted."

"Jesse Fell was a man of mighty vision. He wisely planned for the benefit of his adopted town, for the county of McLean, for the state of Illinois, for the nation, for the freedom of the slave, and always labored for the good of all mankind."

Mr. Fell was a lawyer. He started the first newspaper, "The Bloomington Observer", in 1837. Mr. Fell, in company with his son-in-law Mr. William O. Davis, worked energetically in the field of journalism, and the descendants of

Mr. Davis have proved themselves true to the tradition of their ancestors in the development of one of the finest newspapers of the middle west--The Daily Pantagraph.

Mr. Fell was a great leader for internal improvements, being influential in the development of railroads and schools.

"It is the candid opinion of good judges that no single individual in the United States performed more important service, everything considered, in bringing about the election of Abraham Lincoln, who has proved to be the nation's idol."

On the memorial gateway to Illinois State Normal University is a bronze tablet with the following inscription:

TO THE FOUNDER OF NORMAL

JESSE W. FELL

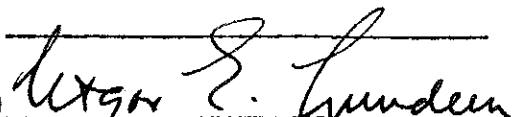
FRIEND OF EDUCATION
LOVER AND PLANTER OF TREES
PHILANTHROPIST OF MIGHTY VISION
THIS GATE IS DEDICATED BY
THE WOMEN'S IMPROVEMENT LEAGUE
AND HIS MANY FRIENDS

References:

"The Life of Jesse W. Fell" by Frances Milton
I. Morehouse, A.M.

Mrs. Rachel Fell Treakle, Normal, Illinois,
daughter of Jesse W. Fell.

(Approved)


District Officer

Rev. Sept. 25 '31 TTD